

40-02-02 --What Child Is This?

Christmas, children, hope, Advent, Christ Child

Matthew 2:1-11

The Christ Child came to change the face of our personal history.

### **INTRODUCTION:** (text as Scripture reading)

--*What child is this* whose birth, at that time, attracted the worship of the wise men, a worship that continued down through history?

--George Matheson (minister who wrote "O Love That Will Not Let Me Go."), described Adam as God's first human child: "We often speak of the story of Adam as a very childish narrative. So it is; but why? Because it is a description of childhood itself. Childhood is a permanent element in the human race.... The man who painted Adam *knew* he was painting a child...."

--Something very special about the atmosphere and anticipation of the first child of young parents, and with every new baby -- it's a disarmament of hardness...

--But many couples hope for more than can be expected by the birth of children descended from the 1<sup>st</sup> fallen child. They look for what can be realized only by the birth in them of God's 2<sup>nd</sup> child, the second Adam, who is the Christ of Christmas: HOM.idea.

--(William Dix wrote a poem that became a Christmas carol: "What Child Is This?" **title**.)

### **I. What Child Is this Who Changes History?**

#### A. What child is this who changed our calendar:

1. Jesus' birthday divided time (B.C. = "before Christ" & A.D. = *anno Domini* ["in the year of the Lord"])
2. The world's resistance to recognizing this Child:
  - a. "*Let's change A.D. to C.E.* ("Common Era") and *B.C. to B.C.E.* ("before the Common Era")" (But, did we go metric?)
  - b. What about the "Y2K" scare? 2000 years after what?
    - (1) How do the redactors of history explain the "WHAT" that divided the C.E. from the B.C.E.?
    - (2) Merriam-Webster defines the Common Era as a noun invented around 1889 to stand for "the Christian Era"

#### B. What child is this whose birthday is the climax of every year:

1. A joke in January: "Only 360 shopping days till Christmas!"
2. Secular radio stations play old Christmas carols that contain the Gospel message (nothing is more evangelistic than *Joy to the World, O Little*

*Town of Bethlehem and Hark the Herald Angels Sing*).

3. People try to make it secular, but it still announces Christ:
  - a. The gift-giving reflects the gift of God's Son to the world.
  - b. It's not "Santa's Season" but the Christmas Season (Christ's Mass: a Church holy day that honors Christ by a special Eucharist).
- C. This Child, who divided history by His 1<sup>st</sup> Advent, will conclude Earth's history at His 2<sup>nd</sup> Advent.

**TRANS:** So....*What child is this* who divides time, whose birthday ends each calendar year and starts us into the next, whose hand will pull the final curtain on Earth's history? "*This, this is Christ the King, Whom shepherds guard and angels sing: Haste, haste to bring Him laud, The Babe the Son of Mary.*"

### **II. What Child Is this Who Fulfills Unfulfilled Expectations?**

- A. There are often wrong expectations about having children:
  1. "*A child would draw us closer and save our marriage.*" (or become in time the last straw to break a marriage apart...)
  2. "*We could achieve something in life through a child.*" (but it's unfair, trying to live your life over again through your children...)
  3. "*Friends & family would approve of our having a child.*" (and they're sure to say how to raise them & what you're doing wrong...)
  4. "*A child would take care of us in our old age.*" (or abandon you, or move too far away to be of practical help...)
- B. But the Christ Child brings "unexpected fulfillment".
  1. This Child came "to seek and to save what was lost." (Luke 19:10)
    - a. Like straying sheep, we had lost our way – This Child would be the Good Shepherd, bringing us back to the safety of God's sheepfold.
    - b. We had lost our world to a powerful demon – "The reason [this Child] appeared was to destroy the devil's work" (1 John 3:8)
    - c. We had lost our strength and our will to go on – this Child came to encourage our hearts with the words, "**Follow Me.**"
  2. God creates miracles in people's lives through this Child (especially when He motivates us to bless the lives of others...)
  3. People may ridicule this Child's place in your life (but when Jesus lives in your heart, you find out what life is all about)
  4. And when time and the trials seem to eat away at your hope,

this Child will hold your hand through the rest of life's journey (and personally guide you into eternity...)

**TRANS:** *What child is this* who fulfills the world's unfulfilled expectations? What will you bring to honor Him? *"So bring Him incense, gold and myrrh, Come peasant, king, to own Him; The King of kings salvation brings, Let loving hearts enthrone Him."*

### III. What Child Is this Who Changes Our Personal Histories?

- A. What if you had never been born? (*It's a Wonderful Life*, played on TV so often during Christmastime, demonstrates how important our lives are, how *they touch other lives*, how human lives are woven together....)
- B. But what if you've never been born again? [*Dickens' A Christmas Carol* gives another kind of picture: what would be the **results of a life lived with an unregenerate heart?**] like Dickens, we can review our unchangeable past, but there is still **hope for the future in this Child** who came at Christmas)
- C. *One last question: What if you are holding someone else's "missing Jesus"?* (There's a Christmas story about a family who got an extra 'baby Jesus' in the manger scene box they bought, so they advertized, "If You're Missing Baby Jesus, Call This Number." No one called, but that year they were able to give the love of Jesus to a very needy family.)  
This Child will change the personal histories of those to whom we introduce Him.

### CONCLUSION:

--The *Christ Child of Christmas* did change all of history, but the way He's done that is by changing the face of our personal histories: changing sinners to saints... "*Why lies He in such mean estate Where ox and ass are feeding? Good Christian, fear: for sinners here The silent Word is pleading.*"

-- [Like the story of the extra Jesus in the manger scene box,] the true Babe of Bethlehem never comes packaged alone. There's a Jesus to be born in your heart, and one to share with others who need Him, too... This year, let's make room for this Child in our own hearts, and then share Him with those who are "Missing Baby Jesus" in their lives.

Matthew 2:1-11, NIV

1 After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem

2 and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him."

3 When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him.

4 When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Christ was to be born.

5 "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written:

6 "But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel."

7 Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared.

8 He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and make a careful search for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him."

9 After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was.

10 When they saw the star, they were overjoyed.

11 On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh.